

“MOTHER’S LAST WORDS.”

A BALLAD.

FROM THE TWENTY-FOURTH ENGLISH EDITION.

TWO HUNDRED AND FORTIETH THOUSAND.

PHILADELPHIA:
AMERICAN SUNDAY-SCHOOL UNION,
No. 1122 CHESTNUT STREET.

Frontispiece.—“Mother’s Last Words.”



“Two little mourners walked behind.”

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“MOTHER’S LAST WORDS.”

FIRST PART.

THE yellow fog lay thick and dim
O'er London city, far and wide ;
It filled the spacious parks and squares,
Where noble lords and ladies ride.

It filled the streets, the shops were dark,
The gas was burning through the day ;
The Monument* was blotted out,
And, lost in gloom, the river lay.

But thicker still, and darker far,
The noisome smoke-cloud grimly fell
Amongst the narrow courts and lanes,
Where toiling people poorly dwell.

No sun above, no lofty sky,
No breezy breath of living air,
The heavy, stagnant, stifling fog
Crept here and there and everywhere.

Down seven steep and broken stairs,
Its chill, unwelcome way it found,
And darkened, with a deeper gloom,
A low, damp chamber, under-ground.

* To keep in memory the great fire of 1666, in which 13,000 houses, besides churches and other public buildings, were destroyed.

A glimmering light was burning there,
Beside a woman on a bed ;
A worn-out woman, ghastly pale,
Departing to the peaceful dead.

Two little boys, in threadbare clothes,
Stood, pale and trembling, by her side,
And listening to his mother’s words,
The youngest of them sadly cried.

The elder boy shed not a tear,
Nor stirred a moment from his place,
But with a corner of the sheet,
He wiped his mother’s cold, damp face.

“ Ah, John ! ” she said, “ my own dear boy,
You’ll soon be in this world alone ;
But you must do the best you can,
And be good children when I’m gone.

“ And listen, John, before ’tis night,
My weary spirit will be free ;
Then go, and tell the overseer,
For he must come to bury me.

“ You’ll walk behind my coffin, dears,
There’s little more I have to crave,
But I should like to have my boys
Just drop a tear beside my grave.

“ And then you’ll have to leave this room,
Because the rent is not all paid,
Since I’ve been ill, I’ve let it run ;
You know, I’ve barely earned your bread.

“ I don’t owe much, I’ve minded that,
And paid it up, though hardly pressed,
The man must take the little things,
And sell the bed, to pay the rest.

“ I’ve mended up your bits of clothes,
It is not much you’ve left to wear,
But keep as decent as you can,
And don’t neglect the house of prayer.

“ I can’t speak of your father, John,
You know that he has been my death ;
If he comes back—you’ll say, ‘ his wife
Forgave him with her dying breath.’

“ But oh, my children ! when I’m gone,
Do mind your mother’s warning well,
And shun all drinking, swearing ways,
As you would shun the pit of hell.

“ I’m going to a happy place,
So beautiful and dazzling bright,
’Twas in a vision, or a dream,
It passed before me in the night.

“ I felt my spirit caught away,
From all the crowd of toiling folk,
Above the cross upon St. Paul’s,
And far above the fog and smoke.

“ And higher, higher up I went,
Until I reached a golden gate,
Where all about in shining rows,
I saw the holy angels wait.

“ At once, they bid me welcome there,
And all at once, began to sing,
‘ Come in, thou blessed of the Lord,
For thou art welcome to the King.’

“ Then one stepped forth, and took my hand,
And spake like music, passing sweet,
‘ We have been watching for thee long,
To bring thee to our Master’s feet.’

“ Then, hand in hand, we floated on,
Through glowing fields of lovely flowers,
And saw ten thousand happy souls
At rest, among the shining bowers.

“ Our Saviour walked among them, John,
Most beautiful He was to see,
And such a heavenly smile He gave,
When first He saw poor worthless me.

“ And oh ! the gracious things He spoke,
I hardly could believe the word ;
‘ Come in, thou faithful one,’ He said,
‘ And rest thee now beside thy Lord.’

“ Then all around, I heard the sound
Of joyous voices, singing praise,
And I stood there, and joined the song,
And looked upon his blessed face.

“ And as I looked, my heart grew strong,
And then I fell before His feet ;
‘ Dear Lord,’ I said, ‘ I pray thee send
An Angel to our wicked street.

“ ‘ I’ve left two little boys behind,
To get through this bad world alone,
And much, I fear, they’ll miss their way,
And never reach Thy glorious throne.’

“ ‘ I will,’ He said, and then He called
A beauteous Angel by his name,
And swifter than an arrow flies,
That beauteous Angel to Him came.

“ And as I knelt before His feet,
I heard the order plainly given,
That he should guard my little boys,
And bring them safe to me in heaven.

“ I saw the Angel bow his head,
And cast on me a look of love,
Then spread his snowy wings to leave
His blissful seat in heaven above.

“ So do not fret about my death,
I know you’ll not be left alone,
For God will send the Angel down,
To care for you, when I am gone.

“ I’m sure you will have daily bread,
For *that* the King gave strict command,
And all the wealth of London town
Is in the power of His hand.

“ So never join with wicked lads
To steal, and swear, and drink, and lie;
For though you are but orphans here,
You’ll have a Father in the sky.

"I can't see plain what you should do,
But God, I think, will make your way,
So don't go to the workhouse, dears,
But try for work, and always pray."

The woman ceased, and closed her eyes,
And long she lay, as if at rest,
Then opened wide her feeble arms,
And clasped her children to her breast.

And then aloft her hands she raised,
And heavenward gazed with beaming eyes,
"I see, I see, the Angel come,
I see him coming from the skies.

"Good bye—good bye, my children dear,
My happy soul is caught away;
I hear, I hear, my Saviour call,
He calls me up, I cannot stay."

Then soared her soul from that dark room,
Above the crowd of toiling folk,
Above the cross upon St. Paul's,
Above the fog, above the smoke.

And higher, higher, up she went,
Until she saw the golden gate,
Where night and day, in shining bands,
The holy angels watch and wait.

And she went in, and saw the King,
And heard the gracious words He spoke
To her, who, in this sinful world,
Had meekly borne her daily yoke.

But sadly sobbed the little boys,
As from the bed of death they crept ;
Upon the floor they sat them down,
And long and piteously they wept.

The dreary walls around them closed,
No father came to share their grief,
No friendly neighbour heard their cry,
None came with pity or relief.

They cried, until their tears were spent,
And darker still the chamber grew ;
And then said little Christopher,
" Now, mother's dead, what shall we do ? "

Then John rose up, and, with his sleeve,
He wiped away the last sad tear,
" Well, we must go, as mother said,
And tell the parish overseer."

" But won't the Angel come to us ? "
" I cannot tell you," John replied ;
" I think he will," said Christopher,
" My mother saw him, when she died."

They stumbled up the broken stairs,
And pushed their way along the street,
Whilst out of sight, an Angel bright
Walked close behind, with shining feet.

He stood beside them at the door,
And heard the growling overseer,
Then touched his heart with sudden smart,
And brought an unexpected tear.

"Here, lads," he said, "divide this bread,
You both look hungry any way;
We'll see about the body, child,
And bury it on Wednesday."

The hungry children ate the loaf,
And then the younger brother said,
"Our mother told us right, you see,
That was all true about the bread."

"It does seem so," was John's reply;
"I say, Chris, shan't you be afraid
To go and sleep at home to-night,
All in the dark there with the dead?"

"Why should we, John? Dead folks don't hurt,
She would not hurt us, if she could;
And as she laid upon the bed,
She looked so happy and so good!"

"Well, come down then—I'm not afraid."
They entered in, and shut the door,
And made a bed, as best they could,
And laid them down upon the floor.

And soundly slept those little boys,
And dreamt about a far-off land,
With shining bowers, and lovely flowers,
And angels flying at command.

They'd never been beyond the town,
To see the beauteous works of God,
Not even seen the daisies spring
By thousands on the level sod.

They had not seen a robin's nest,
Nor plucked a violet in the shade,
Nor stood beside a running brook,
And heard the pleasant sound it made.

They had not seen young lambs at play,
Nor gleaned among the autumn sheaves,
Nor listened to the pattering sound
Of falling rain upon the leaves.

The cuckoo's note was strange to them,
They'd never heard a wild bird sing,
Nor seen the yellow cowslips grow
About the meadows, in the spring.

Nor had they run with rosy boys,
At early morning to the school,
Nor spent the pleasant holidays
In catching minnows in the pool.

Ah, no ! and yet they were not left
With nought but death and darkness there,
A minister of love was sent,
In answer to their mother's prayer.

But little thought those orphan boys,
When to their wretched bed they crept,
That all the night, an Angel bright
Would watch beside them as they slept.

When dimly dawned the light, they rose,
Chris looked around with chattering teeth ;
The sheet was spread from foot to head,
He knew his mother lay beneath.

"Let's go out to the pump and wash,
As *she* would always have us do;
We'd better mind about her words,
I think," said John; "Chris, what say you?"

"Let's go," said Chris; "besides you know,
We've got our breakfast now to find."
They went out in the narrow street;
The shining Angel went behind.

A woman at the baker's shop,
Who knew the children of the dead,
Was touched with pity as they passed,
And gave them each a roll of bread.

"'Tis true," said little Christopher,
"You may be sure the Angel's come;
She never gave us bread before,
No, not the value of a crumb."

The next day, and the next to that,
The promise of the King was kept,
And every night, that Angel bright
Stood by, to guard them as they slept.

On Wednesday the people came,
And took the woman's corpse away;
Two little mourners walked behind,
And saw the grave wherein it lay.

Fast fell the tears upon their cheeks,
When little Christy raised his eyes,
And said, "Oh, mother! how I wish
I was with you above the skies!"

'Twas but a thought passed through his mind,
When soft a whisper seemed to come—
"Be patient, little Christopher,
You are not very far from home."

The minister said, "Dust to dust;"
And then the poor boys left the place,
Two friendless boys in London town;
Oh! was not theirs a hapless case?

They wandered up and down the streets,
And then went home to sleep once more,
And in the morning left the room,
And took the key and locked the door.

They found the landlord at his house,
And said, "Please, sir, our mother's dead;
She could not pay up all the rent,
And we have got to earn our bread.

"But please, sir, we have brought the key,
And left some things upon the shelf,
And there's the blanket and the bed,
My mother thought you'd pay yourself."

"And so she's gone!" the landlord said,
"And you are left to face the strife:
Well, I will say, I never knew
A better woman in my life.

"Of course, I'll take the things, my boy,
For right is right, and so I must;
But there's a shilling for you both:
You'll find it hard to earn your crust."

They thanked the man, and left the house,
“I’ll tell you what we’ll do,” said John,
“This shilling here will buy a broom,
We’ll sweep a crossing of our own.*

“We won’t go to the workhouse, Chris,
But act like men, and do our best;
Our mother said, ‘A crust well earned,
Is sweeter than a pauper’s feast.’”

“Oh, yes; we’ll work like honest boys,
And if our mother should look down,
She’d like to see us with a broom,
And with a crossing of our own.”

Away they went with anxious hopes,
And long they hunted here and there,
Until they found a dirty place,
Not very far from Leicester Square.

And here at once they took their stand,
And swept a pathway broad and neat,
Where ladies, in their silken gowns,
Might cross, and hardly soil their feet.

The people hurried to and fro,
And ‘midst the jostle, jar, and noise,
And thinking of their own affairs,
They hardly saw the little boys.

* Thanks to Our Heavenly Father that he has put it into the heart of benevolent Christian people, in our large cities, to provide comfortable homes for such outcasts, so that they need not resort to any such uncertain and hazardous ways of earning their bread.—*Ed.*

Not so with all ; some caught a sight
Of little Christy's anxious eyes,
And put a penny in his cap ;
And every penny was a prize.

At last the streets began to clear,
And people dropped off, one by one ;
"Let's go," said little Christopher,
"My pocket is quite heavy, John."

They counted up the pence with glee,
And went away to buy some bread,
And had a little left to pay
For lodging in a decent bed.

Next day John kept his crossing clean,
Swept off the mud and left it dry,
And little Christy held his cap,
But did not tease the passers-by.

And many a one a penny gave,
Who marked the pale child's modest way,
Thus they'd a shilling left in hand,
When they went home on Saturday.

The woman at the baker's shop,
In kind remembrance of the dead,
Had found the boys a lodging-place,
Where they could have a decent bed.

"Let's go to church," said Christopher,
"She'd be so glad to see us there ;
You recollect she often said,
'Boys, don't forget the house of prayer !'"

"We're very shabby," John replied,

"And hardly fit for such a place;
But I will do the best I can

To polish up my hands and face."

Clear rung the bells that Sabbath morn,

As they went briskly up the street;
And out of sight, the Angel bright

Walked close behind with shining feet.

Some idle boys, who played about,

Threw stones and mocked as they went in;
"Aye, let them mock away," said John,
"We need not care for them a pin."

A lady watched them, as they sat,

And when the service all was done,
Said, "Do you go to Sunday-school?"

"No, ma'am, but we should like," said John.

She told them both the place and time;

They went that afternoon to school;
The boys were playing in the street,

And said to John, "You are a fool

"To go to that old stupid place;

We know a trick worth two of that."

Said John, "I mean to be a man,

And that's the trick I'm aiming at."

SECOND PART.

THE second week was bleak and cold,
A drizzling rain fell day by day,
And with their wet umbrellas up,
The people hurried on their way.

And no one thought about the boys,
Who patiently stood sweeping there ;
And sometimes over Christy's face,
There fell a shade of blank despair.

Discouraged, wet, and weary oft,
Cold, shivering, to their bed they crept ;
But still all night, that Angel bright
Stood by, to guard them, as they slept.

And these poor boys would sleep as well
As rich men, on their beds of down,
And wake up with a lighter heart,
Than many a king who wears a crown.

But winter time came on apace,
And colder still the weather grew,
And when they left the street at night,
Their clothes were often wet quite through.

Their coats were almost worn to rags,
Their bare feet rested on the stones ;
But still they always went to church,
And to the school on afternoons,

And never joined with wicked boys,
And never stopped away to play,
But tried to do their very best,
And swept the crossing every day.

One day a boy came up, and said,
“I know a dodge worth two of that;
Just take to picking pockets, lad,
And don’t hold out that ragged hat.”

“What, steal!” said little Christopher;
“Our dodge is twice as good as that,
We earn our bread like honest folks;”
And so he answered, tit-for-tat.

“Well, that’s your own look-out, of course;
For my part, I don’t see the fun
Of starving at this crossing here,
When money is so easy won.”

“How do you manage that?” said John.
“Oh! come with us, we’ll have you taught;
You’ve but a trick or two to learn,
To grip the things, and not be caught.”

“But if you should be caught?” said John,
“The end of that would spoil your fun.”
“Oh! we know how to manage that;
Come on! I’ll shew you how ‘tis done.”

“What do you get to eat?” said John,
Who pondered on these boasting words.
“What get to eat!—just what we choose—
We eat and drink away like lords.

“ Now, what d’ye say ?—Make up your mind ;
I’m waited for, and must be gone,
We’ve pretty work to-day, on hand.”

“ Well, I shan’t help to-day,” said John.

“ The more fool you !” replied the boy,
And went off whistling down the street ;
And black as night, a wicked Sprite
Went after him with rapid feet.

John went back slowly to his place,
And grumbling to himself, he said,
“ I half repent I did not go,
It is so hard to earn one’s bread.

“ I dare say he gets in a day
As much as we earn in a week ;
I wish I’d gone.” John muttered this ;
To Christopher he did not speak.

At night, as he went sauntering home,
He loitered round a pastry-cook’s,
Till Christy called, “ John, come along,
You’ll eat the cakes up with your looks !”

“ Well, Chris, I say ’tis very hard,
We never have good things to eat ;
I’m tired of eating just that bread,
I long for something nice and sweet.”

“ They do look nice,” said little Chris,
And lingered near with hankering eyes ;
“ Which would you have, John, if you could ?
I’d have those jolly Christmas pies.”

John answered in a grumbling tone,

"Oh! I don't know, so let 'em be;
Some boys do get nice things to eat;

Not *honest* boys, like you and me."

"Well, never mind," said little Chris,

"You're out of sorts this evening, John;
We'll both be rich, maybe, some day,
And then we'll eat 'em up like fun."

"No chance of that for us," said John,

"Our feet are now upon the stones;
We can't earn food and clothing too,
And you are only skin and bones."

"'Tis hard to work and not to eat;

But John, you would not do what's bad!"

"No; I don't mean to steal—not I;

But when thieves feast, it makes one mad."

And so John grumbled day by day,

And longed for something good to eat,
And sometimes looked out for the boy

Who went off whistling down the street.

And oh! indeed, 'twas very hard,

When tired, hungry, cold, and wet,
To pass by all the eating-shops,

That looked so tempting in the street:

To see the people going in,

To buy the puddings, cakes, and pies,

Whilst they could only stand outside,

And look at them with longing eyes.

'Twas hard to see the smoking meat,
And smell the vapours floating round
Of roasting joints, and savoury steaks,
From steaming kitchens under-ground.

And sometimes little Christy cried,
When limping on with chilblain'd toes,
He saw fine windows full of boots,
And children's shoes in shining rows.

But still he never would complain,
And sometimes said, if John was sad,
"We got on bravely yesterday,
Why should you take to moping, lad ?

"But, John, I think if you and I
Were rich, as these great people are,
We'd just look out for orphan boys,
And give them nice warm clothes to wear."

"Just so," said John, "and we would give
Poor little sweepers in the street
A famous lot of bright pennies,
To buy them something good to eat.

"They'd never miss the little things,
That would make kings of me and you ;
I wish that we were rich men, Chris,
We'd shew 'em what rich men should do."

THIRD PART.

ONE night, between the dark and light,

As they were going down a lane,
And Christopher, with bleeding feet,
Was slowly hobbling on with pain.

John saw some shoes, outside a door,—

"They'll just keep my poor Christy warm!"
And quick as thought, he snatched them up,
And tucked them underneath his arm.

Then pale as ashes grew his face,

And sudden fears rushed on his mind,
He hurried on with quicker pace,
Lest some one should be close behind.

"Do stop a bit," his brother cried,

"Don't be in such a hurry, John;"
John darted round a frightened look,
And from a walk began to run.

He thought he heard the cry of "Thief,"

And swifter down the street he fled ;
And black as night, a wicked Sprite,
With rapid feet, behind him sped.

The cry of "Thief" was in his ears,

Through all the bustle and the din ;
And when he reached the lodging-house,
The wicked Spirit followed in.

He sat down pale, and out of breath,
And locked the door into the street,
And trembled when he only heard
The sound of little Christy's feet.

“ There, Christy, boy—there's shoes for you,
And now you'll cut away like fun ;
Come, let us see how well they fit—
Just give a tug, and they'll be on.”

Then Christopher did laugh outright,
“ Hurra ! hurra !—now I am shod ;
But John, where did you get the shoes ?”
John put him off, and gave a nod.

The little boy was tired out,
And quickly to his bed he crept,
And knew not that a wicked Sprite
Scowled on his brother as he slept.

John could not rest ; the faintest noise
Made all the flesh upon him creep ;
He turned, and turned, and turned again,
But could not get a wink of sleep.

He strained his ears to catch the sound
Of footsteps in the silent night,
And when they came close by the door,
His hair almost rose up with fright.

At last his fear became so great,
That in a cold damp sweat he lay,
And then the thought came in his mind,
That he had better try and pray.

"They tell us at the Sunday-school,
That we must beg to be forgiven :
My mother used to say the same,
Before she went away to heaven.

"I wish I'd let the shoes alone ;
I wonder what I'd better do !
If I should take them back again,
Poor Christy would not have a shoe.

"Though I don't think he'd care for that,
For he's a better boy than I,
And he would sooner starve to death
Than steal a thing or tell a lie.

"Are you asleep, Chris ? Can't you wake ?
I want to tell you something bad ;
I've counted all the hours to-night ;
I say, Chris, can't you wake up, lad ?"

Just then the child screamed in his sleep,
And started upright in his bed :—
"Are you there, John ? Who's in the room ?
Oh, John ! I dreamt that you were dead.

"I'm glad enough that I woke up,
"I'm glad you're all alive and well ;
I'd such an ugly dream—I saw
The devil taking you to hell."

"And so he will, if I don't mind,
As far as that, your dream is right ;
And as to going off to hell,
I think I've been in hell all night."

“What have you done?”—“Why, stole some
shoes,

That very pair I gave to you;
But I can’t rest about it, Chris,
I want to know what we shall do.

“Why, take them back, of course,” said Chris,

“And put them where they were before;
Let’s go at once.”—“No, stop,” said John,
“The clock has only just struck four.

“There’s no one stirring in the street,
The shops will not be opened yet,
And we should have to wait about
For hours in the cold and wet.

“And now, that I’ve made up my mind,
I don’t feel half so much afraid.”

Then took to flight that evil Sprite,
And John lay down his weary head.

At six o’clock the boys went out,
The snow was falling in the street,
And through the bitter morning air,
They ran along with naked feet.

They watched the busy town wake up,
Undoing shutter, bolt, and bar;
But full two hours they walked about,
Before that door was set ajar.

John quickly slipped the shoes inside,
And then as quickly walked away,
And with a lighter heart he went
To face the labours of the day.

Fast fell the feathery, floating snow,
In whirling currents driven round,
Or fluttered down in silent showers
Of fleecy flakes upon the ground.

With broom in hand, and shivering limbs,
The little sweepers bravely stood,
And faced the cutting north-east wind,
That seemed to chill their very blood.

A lady, in a house close by,
Who often watched the little boys,
Heard many times, that stormy day,
A deep cough mingling with the noise.

She rose up from her blazing fire,
And from the window looked about,
And hard at work amongst the snow,
She spied the ragged sweepers out.

“ Do, Geraldine, look here,” she said,
“ How thin that youngest boy has grown;
Poor little wretch!—how cold he looks,
He’s little more than skin and bone.”

“ Poor little boy!” said Geraldine,
“ I never saw a paler face;
I think they must be honest boys,
They keep so constant to their place.

“ There’s Frank and Freddy’s worn-out shoes
I think would fit them very well.”
“ Perhaps they would; I’ll have them brought,
My dear, if you will ring the bell.

“ And there’s your brothers’ old great coats,
They’ll never put them on again ;
But they would keep these children warm,
In many a storm of wind and rain.”

“ And give them something nice to eat ;
I don’t mean dry old crusts of bread,
But good mince-pies,” said Geraldine,
“ You know we have a plenty made.”

“ Well, do so, if you like, my dear.”

“ Oh ! thank you ; they shall have some pies.”
Poor John, and little Christopher,
They hardly could believe their eyes.

They took the clothes, and nice mince-pies,
They bowed and thanked, and bowed again,
Then scampered down the splashy streets,
And reached their own dull dirty lane.

And there they fitted on the coats,
And turned the pockets inside out,
Stuck up the collars round their ears,
Put on the shoes, and marched about.

They rubbed their hands and laughed amain,
And twisted one another round,
And then John turned a somerset,
And cleared the bedstead with a bound.

“ But now for these fine Christmas pies,”
He said, and smacked his lips with glee,
“ They’re just the things you wanted, Chris,
There’s two for you and two for me.

" We never had such luck before,
We never dreamt of such a thing."

" I think 'twas mother's Angel, John,
Who had that order from the King."

" You don't mean that in earnest, Chris?"

" Why not?" said Chris, " I'm sure I do.
I say, John, if we died to-night,
Should we both go to heaven, too?"

" Well, Christopher, last night, I thought
I should be sure to go to hell;
What sort of place that's like to be,
I've now a notion I could tell.

" I'm pretty sure, if I had died
Last night, without my sins forgiven,
I'd not a single chance to go
To be with mother, up in heaven.

" I wish I'd never touched the shoes;
To steal is such a shameful sin,
And though they're taken back again,
I don't feel yet all right within.

" It was so bad, to go and steal!
Four months to-day you know *she* died;
And though we've fared quite hard enough,
Our wants have mostly been supplied.

" Some boys, we know, have had no bed,
A deal worse off than you and I,
For we have always had some bread,
And just a place where we could lie.

“ And now we’ve got some clothes to wear,
And days will soon be getting long,
And then, old boy, we’ll shortly see
You picking up, and getting strong.”

“ I don’t know, John—I fancy not,
I sometimes think I’m going to die;
I dream so much about the place
Where mother went—I don’t know why.

“ Except, maybe, I’m going too :
I saw one night, John, in a doze,
That Angel that my mother saw,
With snowy wings and shining clothes.

“ He looked at me, and then he smiled,
And said, ‘ Your time will soon be come;
Be patient, little Christopher,
You’re going to a better home.’

“ You know last Sunday at the school,
The lady told us how to pray,
And said, ‘ that Jesus Christ had come,
To die, and take our sins away.’

“ And so I begged He’d take all mine,
And Johnny, I believe He will;
And now I should not mind to die,
If we could be together still.”

“ Oh ! Christy, boy, you must not die ;
What should I do without you here ?
Oh ! do get well—you must get well,”
And John brushed off a starting tear.

The winter passed, and spring-time came,
And summer days grew warm and long ;
But little Christy weaker grew,
And soon could hardly creep along.

And then he stopped all day at home,
And soon he hardly left his bed,
And John was forced to leave him there,
To earn for both their daily bread.

Sometimes the lady at the house
Gave John some little jobs to do,
And when she found he did them well,
She sent him on her errands, too.

And now when Christopher was ill,
And John was leaving for the night,
She gave him little dainty things,
To please his brother's appetite.

The woman at the baker's shop
Had always been a faithful friend,
And often came to see the child,
And staid awhile to wash and mend.

The lady at the Sunday-school
Found out the little orphans' home,
And she would come and read to Chris,
And he was glad to see her come.

She talked about the heavenly King,
And she would kneel and softly pray ;
And thus he lingered on awhile,
Still getting weaker day by day.

'Twas on a sultry summer's night,
When heavy lay the stifling air,
As John was dropping off to sleep,
He heard a softly whispered prayer.

He knew 'twas Chris, and did not stir,
And then he heard a gentle sigh ;
It was the dear boy's happy soul,
Escaping to its home on high.

He left behind his wasted form,
He rose above the toiling folk,
Above the cross upon St. Paul's,
Above the fog, above the smoke.

And higher, higher, up he went,
Until he reached the golden gate,
Where night and day, in shining bands,
The holy angels watch and wait.

And he went in, and saw the King,
The Saviour, who for him had died,
And found once more his mother dear ;
And little Chris was satisfied.

And there they both together wait,
Till John shall reach that happy home,
And often from the golden gate,
They watch in hopes to see him come.

But John had many years to live,
For he had useful work to do,
And he grew up an honest man,
A sober man, and Christian too.

His friend, the lady at the house,
When little Chris was dead and gone,
Bound John apprentice to a trade,
And so he did not feel alone.

And that bright Minister of Love,
Appointed by the Saviour King
To guard those orphan boys on earth,
And then to heavenly glory bring,

Still walked with John his journey through,
And though unseen was ever nigh,
Nor left him till his work was done,
And then went up with him on high.

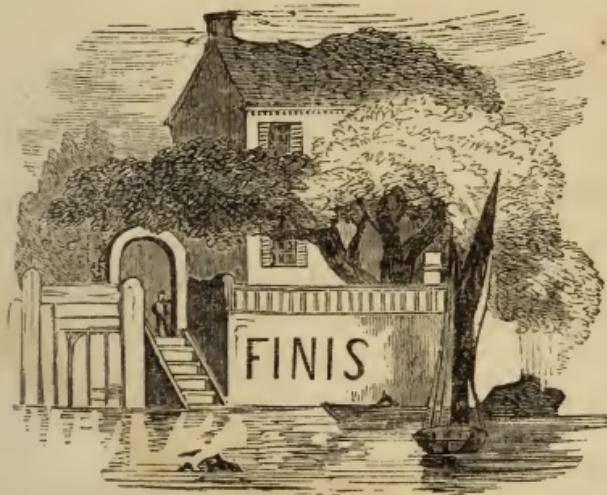
And there, in everlasting joy,
The mother and the brothers meet,
To part no more, and weep no more,
Nor dwell in that dark, dirty street;

To toil no more with bleeding feet,
Nor hungering long for something nice ;
For they are clothed as angels are,
And eat the fruits of Paradise.

No more the cold shall freeze their limbs,
Nor darkness chill their dreary night ;
It is eternal summer there,
And all the blessed rest in light :

And there, with thousand thousand souls,
All saved from sorrow, fear, and shame,
They join to sing the happy song
Of praise to God, and to the Lamb.

Dear boys, who read the simple tale
Of these poor sweepers in the street,
The gracious God, who cared for them,
Will also guide your willing feet.



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